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The Boston Globe

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 1969

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Developing the harbor

The victim of official myopia for decades, Boston Harbor's islands have at last been recognized for what they are, perhaps the greatest untapped natural resource in New England.

At a State House conference yesterday on The Future of Islands, Waters, and Shoreline of Boston Harbor, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy pledged to ask for a Federal study of the harbor as a possible recreational facility.

While not excluding the development of the islands for residential or commercial development, the study sought by Sen. Kennedy would be aimed primarily at meeting recreational needs, an area that has been neglected for too long.

Related to Sen. Kennedy's proposal for the islands is the effort to hold the 1976 World Exposition in Boston, a venture that would combine the nation's bicentennial celebration with the construction of an urban community in the harbor.

A financial study of the feasibility of Expo Boston undertaken by a private consulting firm shows that the project would cost a total of \$1.6 billion.

An "Expo Government Corporation" would be formed to organize and manage the entire project, with its board of directors named by the three levels of government which will provide the capital. The Federal government would provide half the funds, the state 35 percent and Boston 15 percent, with the corporation soliciting financial support from the private sector as exhibitors or as owners of the new community, and from the public sector for construction of the community.

It is estimated that the Expo Government Corporation will need a total of \$500 million capital, but that much of that amount will be repaid before the corporation concludes its affairs

in 1980. The remainder of the funds will be provided by exhibitors, government programs and new community investors.

Thus, according to the projected formula, the Federal government would provide \$250 million of the required half-billion; the commonwealth \$175 million, and the City of Boston \$75 million.

The profits of the exposition would go to the corporation, which would recover part of its investment by selling those assets which remain after the exposition closed. The net cost to the corporation would be about \$200 million, which would be borne by the Federal government. The state and the city ultimately would recover their total investments, according to the cost study, because they would have first priority on profits and return of capital.

Assuming that the American Revolutionary Bicentennial Commission selects Boston as the Expo site, and that the city issues revenue bonds to finance its share, it is estimated that the only direct cost to the city would be about \$2.00 on the 1974-75 tax rate.

Among the advantages of the Expo Boston proposal is that it would provide a new community for about 50,000 people from all economic strata, and a cleaned-up harbor.

The proposal by Sen. Kennedy, and a proposed Federal-state partnership by Gov. Sargent to determine which government should develop the harbor, need not be in conflict with the Boston Expo plan, which would be confined to Thompson's Island and Columbia Point.

Boston, the crucible of the nation's freedom, is the logical site for the bicentennial celebration. And the financial study gives strong support for the argument that it can be accomplished without a fiscal strain on the city or state.

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